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Summary record of the 36th meeting
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Chair: Mr. Tommo Monthe ..... (Cameroon)
Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Ruiz Massieu

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 154: Financing of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (A/72/638, A/72/638/Corr.1, A/72/778, A/72/784, A/72/784/Add.1, A/72/789/Add.11 and A/72/844)

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Agenda item 164: Financing of the activities arising from Security Council resolution 1863 (2009) (A/72/650, A/72/763 and A/72/789/Add.6)

1. **Ms. Bartsiotas** (Controller), introducing the budget performance report for the period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017 (A/72/638 and A/72/638/Corr.1), the proposed budget for the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019 (A/72/784 and A/72/784/Add.1) and the note on financing arrangements for the period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018 (A/72/778) for the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), said that the Secretary-General had proposed additional requirements of $47.9 million for 2017/18, as substantial changes had had a significant impact on the capacity of the Mission to implement its mandate. Those changes were connected with the Mission's efforts to support the revision of the electoral register, to provide technical and financial support for the presidential and legislative elections to be held in December 2018, to reinforce the security of United Nations premises and to ensure the protection of civilians following several attacks, and with other unforeseen operational requirements.

2. The Secretary-General had proposed a budget of $1.153 billion for the maintenance of MONUSCO in 2018/19, based on the recommendations of the 2017 strategic review of the Mission, which included the need to support the political process to pave the way for credible, inclusive and peaceful elections and to focus on the protection of civilians. That reprioritization had resulted in the streamlining of civilian tasks, the development of a new architectural framework to ensure a comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians, and a shift towards a "protection through projection" approach, while maintaining a static presence where required, thus enabling a small force to cover a large geographical area, which would be critical during the electoral period. In addition, a commitment authority of $84.5 million had been requested to enable the Mission to support the electoral process and assist the Independent National Electoral Commission in adjusting its operational strategy, as mandated by the Security Council in its resolution 2348 (2017). The related estimated additional resource requirements were based on a comprehensive and integrated plan and the information available at the time of preparation of the proposal.

3. Introducing the budget performance report for the period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017 (A/72/622) and the proposed budget for the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019 (A/72/718) for the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), she said that a budget of $37.9 million was proposed for 2018/19, representing an increase of 0.1 per cent over the 2017/18 budget. UNMIK would continue to strengthen and consolidate peace, security and stability in Kosovo and the surrounding region and to carry out projects and activities to fulfil its mandates, including the promotion and protection of human rights and the rule of law, and the building of trust between communities. As part of the efforts to mitigate the environmental impact of its operations, UNMIK was installing solar energy systems, monitoring groundwater, carrying out wastewater analysis, planting trees and conducting awareness-raising campaigns.

4. Introducing the budget performance report of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) for the period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017 (A/72/640 and A/72/640/Corr.1), she said that, pursuant to Security Council resolution 2333 (2016), the Mission would be liquidated by 30 June 2018. In 2016/17, UNMIL had incurred $182.8 million in expenditure, against approved resources of $187.1 million, an implementation rate of 97.7 per cent. The reduced requirements were primarily due to the drawdown of uniformed personnel and lower operational costs owing to reduced requirements for air and ground transportation, the early decommissioning of a naval vessel, the closure of sites and the utilization of existing inventory. Those reductions had been partially offset by higher-than-planned payments to staff members on separation from service or relocation to another duty station and the promulgation of new salary scales for national staff.

5. Introducing the budget performance report for the period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017 (A/72/663) and the proposed budget for the period from 1 July 2018 to

30 June 2019 (A/72/746) for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), she said that the proposed budget of $1.099 billion represented an increase of 4.9 per cent over the 2017/18 budget. The pace of implementation of the peace agreement remained slow and unpredictable, owing in part to slow engagement among the signatory parties, the increasing role of spoiler groups, and insecurity in the north and centre of the country due to the presence of violent extremist armed groups. Civil unrest had increased and armed clashes between signatory parties had repeatedly taken place.

6. The Mission's priorities for 2018/19 were the provision of support for the implementation of the peace agreement; the protection of civilians, particularly in the north and centre of the country; and the extension of State authority, including through increased support for the Malian Defence and Security Forces, whose capacities were expected to increase. It was assumed that the Malian Defence and Security Forces would progressively deploy throughout the country and develop an improved capacity to mitigate explosive threats, including through the disposal of explosive ordnance and improvised explosive devices and the management of weapons and ammunition. However, their capacities, and those of key government institutions, would remain too weak to independently reassert State authority in the north and strengthen it in the centre or to prevent a further deterioration of the security, humanitarian, human rights and development situation. The support of the international community, including the Group of Five for the Sahel, remained essential.

7. Introducing the budget performance report for the period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017 (A/72/623) and the proposed budget for the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019 (A/72/731) for the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), she said that a budget of $53.9 million was proposed for 2018/19, an increase of 3.6 per cent over the 2017/18 budget. Given that security was a growing concern for the Mission and the parties to the conflict, MINURSO had reinforced the security of team sites east of the berm. Additional mitigation and prevention measures were proposed for 2018/19, with a view to reducing risk and allowing the Mission to implement its mandate. In terms of environmental activities, the Mission would implement the third phase of the borehole drilling project, which would address the logistical challenges and security vulnerabilities of transporting water to team sites.

8. Introducing the budget performance report for the period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017 (A/72/650) and the proposed budget for the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019 (A/72/763) for the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS), she said that a budget of $568.7 million was proposed for 2018/19, a decrease of 2.3 per cent over the 2017/18 budget. UNSOS would continue to provide logistical support to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), including through the expansion of mission enabling units to all sectors to increase the efficiency of delivery along the main supply routes. Through the Mine Action Service, UNSOS would continue to support AMISOM with improvised explosive device threat mitigation options through mission enabling units, sector mobility operations, explosive-detection dogs and explosive hazard clearance capacity. UNSOS would undertake critical security upgrades; relocate its premises at Mogadishu International Airport to a distance of 150 metres from the runway, as requested by the Government of Somalia to meet International Civil Aviation Organization safety standards; improve camp infrastructure; and undertake environmental enhancements. UNSOS proposed to harmonize its mission support structure with that of other field missions.

9. **Mr. Ruiz Massieu** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the reports of the Advisory Committee on the budget performance for the period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017 and proposed budget and additional resource requirements for the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019 of MONUSCO (A/72/789/Add.11) and the financing arrangements for MONUSCO for the period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018 (A/72/844), said that the Advisory Committee recommended the approval of the additional resources requested for 2017/18 to meet the needs of the Mission in connection with the forthcoming elections. The Advisory Committee recommended the abolishment of 21 long-vacant posts and recommended against the establishment of two Professional posts. It also recommended further reductions under facilities and infrastructure, official travel and air operations.

10. With regard to the Secretary-General's request for a commitment authority for the 2018/19 period in connection with technical assistance and logistical support for the electoral process, the Advisory Committee recommended approval of an authorization to enter into commitments in an amount not exceeding $80 million and expected that, should unexpected resource needs arise, they would be fully absorbed within existing resources, and that information on actual expenditures incurred would be presented in the Mission's performance report for the period.

11. Introducing the report of the Advisory Committee on UNMIK (A/72/789/Add.4), he said that the cash position of the Mission failed to cover the three-month operating cash reserve. The Advisory Committee recommended that a vacancy rate of 10 per cent should be applied to the cost estimates for international staff, as that rate was closer to the actual rate. The Advisory Committee had indicated in its previous report on UNMIK that the Mission had made efforts to adjust the number of vehicles to the projected requirements for each personnel category within the limits of the standard ratios. In that connection, he recalled the Advisory Committee's previous recommendation that similar efforts should be undertaken across all peacekeeping missions.

12. Introducing the report of the Advisory Committee on UNMIL (A/72/839), he said that, while the Mission had achieved a budget implementation rate of 97.7 per cent, actual expenditures had diverged significantly from the planned budget. The Advisory Committee recommended that the Secretariat should provide a more realistic budgeting methodology for future missions undergoing drawdown and liquidation, and build on lessons learned. Those lessons should be included in the revised edition of the liquidation manual being developed by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support.

13. The Advisory Committee noted the progress made on environmental management during the performance period and trusted that all future sites to be closed would be handed over in compliance with the guidance issued by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support. The Advisory Committee trusted that the Mission would continue to apply environmentally friendly practices, including treating contaminated soil and disposing properly of unused sea containers. As an exceptional measure, the Advisory Committee supported the proposal that the General Assembly should authorize the Secretary-General to use the Peacekeeping Reserve Fund for cash flow purposes in respect of expenditures identified after the closure of the Mission, with the prior concurrence of the Advisory Committee, and to report thereon in the final performance report.

14. Introducing the report of the Advisory Committee on MINUSMA (A/72/789/Add.14), he said that the recommendations of the Advisory Committee would entail a reduction of $6.7 million to the proposed budget. Under civilian personnel, the Advisory Committee recommended against the establishment of one Field Service post. The Advisory Committee had also recommended reductions under official travel, facilities and infrastructure, air operations, communications and information technology and training. The recommendations of the Advisory Committee on the actions to be taken by the General Assembly in connection with MINUSMA were set out in section V of its report. The Advisory Committee had concurred with the Controller's request to enter into commitments in an amount not exceeding $43,174,000 gross to meet the requirements for the additional military and police personnel authorized by the Security Council in its resolution 2295 (2016).

15. Introducing the report of the Advisory Committee on MINURSO (A/72/789/Add.1/Rev.1), he said that the Advisory Committee recommended a reduction of $527,400 to the proposed budget. Under operational costs, in view of the pattern of expenditures, the Advisory Committee recommended a reduction of 5 per cent to the resources for facilities and infrastructure and communications and information technology.

16. Introducing the report of the Advisory Committee on UNSOS (A/72/789/Add.6), he said that the recommendations of the Advisory Committee would entail a reduction of $2.6 million to the proposed budget. The procurement audit carried out by the Board of Auditors at the request of the Advisory Committee had identified several issues, such as a total overexpenditure of $64.5 million under the transportation of rations for 2015/16 and 2016/17, and expenditures of a total of $19.2 million for three financial periods without budgetary provisions. UNSOS should improve its management of the outsourcing contract with the third-party contractor and the provision of medical services.

17. The Advisory Committee recognized the challenging environment in which UNSOS operated. Nevertheless, the Advisory Committee shared the view of the Board of Auditors that UNSOS must strengthen internal controls and enforce accountability over procurement and contract management. The Advisory Committee expected that lessons would be learned and applied in future management of all contracts by UNSOS and other peacekeeping missions. Concerning the proposed redeployment of 183 posts and the realignment of 208 posts, the Advisory Committee recalled that UNSOS had undergone a series of reorganizations in recent years, including redeployments and realignments. The Advisory Committee was of the view that UNSOS must focus on its operations without continuous reorganizations of its structure.

18. **Mr. Traore** (Mali), paying tribute to the memory of those who had lost their lives in the crisis in Mali, said that the Organization owed it to them, and to the people striving to bring peace and stability to the

country, to ensure that MINUSMA had sufficient resources, particularly in the light of Security Council resolutions 2295 (2016) and 2364 (2017), which had strengthened the Mission's mandate and increased its force levels.

19. There should be a greater focus on protecting MINUSMA personnel and helping the Malian Defence and Security Forces to protect civilians, in the light of the increase in asymmetric attacks against international and Malian troops and civilians. His delegation took note of the Mission's mine-detection and mine-clearing programme, which was focused on explosive threat mitigation. MINUSMA must be properly equipped with aerial systems to enable it to monitor and protect large areas. In addition, armoured personnel carriers should be replaced with mine-protected vehicles.

20. To bring an end to the crisis in Mali, action was required at the regional level. Greater cooperation with the Group of Five for the Sahel and its Joint Force was needed. His delegation urged MINUSMA to continue reducing its environmental footprint and to involve local communities in natural resource management initiatives. In that connection, he welcomed the establishment of the group of friends leading on environmental management in the field.

21. **Mr. Davies** (Liberia) paid tribute to the memory of Bernard Tanoh-Boutchoué, Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire to the United Nations.

22. While it was important to prevent conflicts and maintain peace, many parts of the world were already engulfed in conflict. The international community must help to bring peace to those areas. His delegation was immensely appreciative of the contribution made by the United Nations and its Member States to bringing peace to Liberia. UNMIL had been one of the largest peacekeeping operations in the history of the United Nations, with over 126,500 military officers, 16,000 police officers and 23,000 civilian staff deployed in total. Peacekeepers must be ready and able to deal with the ever-changing nature of conflict, secure in the knowledge that they had the full support of the international community.

23. Liberia had moved from hosting a peacekeeping mission to being able to help other States, such as Mali. Thanks to the support of the Organization, Liberia had held three successful elections, in 2005, 2011 and 2017. While UNMIL had successfully completed its mandate, there was a need to continue supporting the new United Nations country team in Liberia as it accompanied the country on its journey to achieving sustainable peace.

24. **Ms. Nikodijevic** (Serbia) said that her delegation attached great importance to the activities of UNMIK in Kosovo and Metohija, where it had gained the greatest measure of trust among the Serbian and other non-Albanian communities. Its continued presence was of paramount importance because of its status-neutral approach, based on Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). Owing to the long-standing lack of inter-ethnic trust, the Mission's presence was indispensable to building lasting peace, stability and security and to implementing the agreements reached between Belgrade and Pristina in the framework of the European-Union-facilitated dialogue. In the light of recent events in Kosovo and Metohija, the Mission's mandate should be maintained and the scope of its activities enhanced.

25. Calls for savings should not result in unjustified reductions to the Mission's budget, as that would have an adverse effect on its role in preserving stability in the area it covered and in the wider region. The United Nations must take a proactive approach to the question of Kosovo and Metohija. Serbia was opposed to attempts to marginalize the Mission within the Organization. The personnel and financial capacities of UNMIK must be strengthened to enable it to implement its mandate.

26. On 26 March 2018, so-called "Kosovo police" had interrupted a peaceful gathering held in Kosovska Mitrovica in the context of the internal dialogue on Kosovo and Metohija and had brutally arrested the Director of the Office for Kosovo and Metohija of the Government of Serbia, Marko Đurić. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia had written to the President of the Security Council to inform him of the incident (see S/2018/274). The Secretary-General, in his most recent report on UNMIK (S/2018/407), had noted that "a number of developments during the reporting period have heightened tensions and negatively impacted relations between Belgrade and Pristina" and that "the conduct of Kosovo police during a high-profile operation such as the arrest of Mr. Đurić, which resulted in a number of injuries, is cause for concern". The Secretary-General had added that "a thorough inquiry is needed into the events of 26 March, with corrective action in case of failures to uphold human rights".

27. That incident, coupled with the murder of Kosovo Serb politician Oliver Ivanović, confirmed the seriousness and the volatility of the security situation in Kosovo and Metohija and the importance of the Mission's continued presence. In his report on UNMIK (S/2018/407), the Secretary-General had said "I note, with concern, the slow pace of progress of the investigation" adding that "So long as credible answers and justice are not obtained, mutual suspicions and

perceptions of insecurity will continue to undermine efforts to build trust among communities throughout Kosovo".

28. Some 19 years after the establishment of UNMIK, there were still 200,000 internally displaced people living in the central part of Serbia, having fled Kosovo and Metohija because of threats and persecution. Owing to numerous attacks on Kosovo and Metohija Serbs and their property and cultural heritage, a matter to which the Mission should pay greater attention, only 1.9 per cent of that number had been able to return. Indeed, according to the report of the Secretary-General, between 17 January and 15 April 2018, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had recorded just three voluntary returns to Kosovo by members of non-majority communities.

29. Her delegation was disappointed that UNMIK continued to experience high vacancy rates. All vacant posts must be filled expeditiously, as recommended by the Advisory Committee in its report (A/72/789/Add.4). Failure to fill vacancies was a violation of General Assembly resolution 71/303 on the financing of UNMIK. Her delegation did not agree with the Advisory Committee's recommendation to apply a higher vacancy rate to the cost estimates for international staff. Its recommendation was based on the actual vacancy rate for international staff, which was misleading as the rate was artificially high owing to constant delays in the recruitment process. She wondered why the Advisory Committee had made such a recommendation, given that the discrepancy between budgeted and actual vacancy rates at UNMIK had existed for many years. If applied, the recommendation would result in a reduction of over $700,000 to the proposed resources. She reiterated her country's strong support for the allocation of adequate resources for the programmatic activities and confidence-building projects through which UNMIK sought to improve the rule of law, human rights and reconciliation among communities, which were areas of key importance to the realization of its mandate.

Agenda item 136: Programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019 (*continued*) (A/72/7/Add.47 and A/72/371/Add.9)

Estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council (*continued*)

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

30. **Ms. Bartsiotas** (Controller), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the revised proposed resource requirements for 2018 for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) (A/72/371/Add.9), said that the General Assembly, in its resolution 72/262, section XXII, had taken note of paragraph 36 of the report of the Advisory Committee (A/72/7/Add.14) and had decided not to approve the budget proposal for UNAMA (A/72/371/Add.4); however, it had decided to authorize the Secretary-General to enter into commitments in the amount of $82.9 million for the period from 1 January to 30 June 2018. The Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to present an updated budget proposal at the second resumed part of its seventy-second session.

31. The updated budget proposal for 2018 amounted to $151.4 million, a decrease of $12.7 million compared to the approved resources for 2017. In its resolution 2405 (2018), the Security Council had extended the mandate of UNAMA until 17 March 2019. The previous budget for 2018 had proposed resources in the amount of $140.4 million; the variance of $11 million was mainly due to revised assumptions regarding civilian incumbency and changes to standard salary costs for international staff.

32. **Mr. Ruiz Massieu** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/72/7/Add.47), said that the Secretary-General's updated budget proposal represented an increase of $11 million compared with the original proposal. The Advisory Committee had made a number of recommendations on matters including vacancy rates. With specific regard to civilian personnel, the Advisory Committee was recommending against the proposed establishment of three posts in the Donor Coordination Section. In terms of operational costs, the Committee was recommending adjustments to the resource requirements for consultants and ground transportation. Regarding the UNAMA Support Office in Kuwait and the Kuwait Joint Support Office, the Advisory Committee continued to question the validity of maintaining two separate structures. It recalled that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 70/248, any changes to the existing and future service delivery model must be approved by the Assembly.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.